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Law Enforcement Against the Illegal Distribution of Hazardous Skincare Products in Langsa City

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Abstract: The circulation of hazardous skincare products without distribution permits from the National Agency of Drug and Food Control (BPOM) constitutes a serious issue that directly affects public health and consumer protection. This phenomenon has also occurred in Langsa City, in line with the increasing distribution of skincare products through social media and digital platforms.This study aims to analyze the forms of supervision, the obstacles to law enforcement, and the efforts to combat the criminal offense of distributing hazardous skincare products in Langsa City. The research employs an empirical juridical method with both statutory and field approaches. Data were collected through literature review and interviews with relevant institutions, such as BPOM and law enforcement authorities, and were subsequently analyzed qualitatively. The results indicate that although the legal framework governing cosmetic supervision and law enforcement is adequately established, its implementation at the regional level has not yet been optimal. The main obstacles include limited supervisory resources, difficulties in monitoring skincare distribution through social media, and the low level of legal awareness among business actors and consumers. Law enforcement efforts remain dominated by administrative sanctions, while the application of criminal sanctions has not yet produced a significant deterrent effect. This study concludes that combating the criminal offense of hazardous skincare distribution in Langsa City requires an integrative approach that combines strengthened supervision, consistent law enforcement, public education, and the utilization of digital technology in order to ensure sustainable consumer protection and public health..

Keywords:**Hazardous Skincare, Consumer Protection, Law Enforcement, BPOM, Langsa City**

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of the skincare industry in Indonesia over the past decade has shown very rapid growth, in line with increasing public awareness of skin care, health, and appearance. Skincare products are no longer positioned merely as secondary needs, but have become part of the modern lifestyle, particularly among teenagers and young adults. However, the rapid growth of this industry has not always

been accompanied by legal compliance among business actors.(Kashuri et al., 2025) In various regions, including Langsa City, the circulation of skincare products without distribution permits and containing hazardous substances remains a phenomenon that is difficult to control. These products are generally marketed with claims of instant results, relatively affordable prices, and aggressive promotion through social media and digital platforms, making them attractive to consumers without due consideration of product safety and legality.(Putri & Imanullah, 2023)

The circulation of hazardous skincare products is essentially not merely an administrative violation, but has developed into a matter of criminal law and public health. Illegal skincare products often contain dangerous substances such as mercury, high-dose hydroquinone, and steroids, the use of which may cause serious health impacts, both in the short and long term. These risks include skin irritation, tissue damage, hormonal system disorders, and even internal organ damage if used continuously. In this situation, consumers are placed in a highly vulnerable position due to limited information, low legal literacy, and the dominance of misleading promotional claims. Therefore, the state bears a legal obligation to ensure consumer protection through effective supervision and law enforcement against skincare products circulating in the market.(Chana, 2025)

Normatively, Indonesia has established a fairly comprehensive legal framework governing the circulation of cosmetics and skincare products. Law Number 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection, Law Number 36 of 2009 concerning Health, as well as various regulations issued by the National Agency of Drug and Food Control (BPOM), explicitly require that every skincare product distributed must meet safety and quality standards and obtain a distribution permit prior to marketing. These regulations also provide for administrative and criminal sanctions for business actors who violate legal provisions. Nevertheless, the existence of such adequate regulations has not been fully effective in suppressing the circulation of hazardous skincare products at the regional level. This condition reflects a gap between the normative provisions of the law (das sollen) and the reality of their implementation in practice (das sein).(Damari & Damayanti, 2025)

Langsa City, as one of the regions experiencing continuous commercial growth, also faces the issue of illegal skincare circulation, both through conventional and digital distribution channels. The development of information technology and social media has transformed distribution patterns, with online marketing characterized by cross-regional reach, anonymity, and difficulty in traceability. This distribution model poses a serious challenge to conventional supervisory systems that primarily focus on direct inspections of physical stores, pharmacies, and authorized distributors.

Consequently, supervision and law enforcement against skincare products without distribution permits are often reactive in nature and undertaken only after complaints or consumer harm have occurred.

From the perspective of legal theory, Lawrence M. Friedman argues that legal effectiveness is determined by three main elements: legal structure, legal substance, and legal culture. The legal structure in skincare supervision includes institutions such as BPOM, the Health Office, and the Police, which formally possess supervisory and law enforcement authority. Legal substance encompasses the statutory regulations governing cosmetic distribution and consumer protection, which are normatively adequate. However, the legal culture of society and business actors—whose level of legal awareness remains low—constitutes a major inhibiting factor in combating the circulation of hazardous skincare products, particularly at the local level such as in Langsa City.

In line with this view, Satjipto Rahardjo emphasizes the importance of progressive and substantive law—law that is not solely oriented toward formal legal certainty, but also toward real protection for vulnerable parties. In the context of illegal skincare circulation, consumers occupy a weak and vulnerable position with respect to both health and economic harm. Therefore, efforts to combat the criminal offense of distributing hazardous skincare products cannot rely solely on a repressive approach, but must also be supported by preventive, educational, and participatory measures involving various stakeholders.

Based on these conditions, the mitigation of the criminal offense of distributing hazardous skincare products in Langsa City constitutes an important and relevant issue for in-depth study. This problem is not only related to consumer protection and public health, but also concerns the effectiveness of supervisory and law enforcement systems at the regional level. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze supervision mechanisms, obstacles to law enforcement, and strategies for combating the criminal distribution of hazardous skincare products in Langsa City through an empirical juridical approach, in order to formulate more effective, integrated, and justice-oriented countermeasures.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs an empirical juridical approach, namely legal research that examines law not only as written norms (law in books), but also as actual behavior in society (law in action). This approach is used to understand the effectiveness of supervision and law enforcement in addressing the criminal offense of distributing hazardous skincare products as carried out by law enforcement officials and related agencies in Langsa City.(Iqbal et al., 2025)

The type of research used is empirical legal research with a descriptive-analytical nature. This study aims to systematically describe the implementation of supervision and law enforcement concerning the distribution of hazardous skincare products and to analyze the conformity between applicable legal provisions and practices in the field.

The research location was determined in Langsa City, based on indications of the circulation of skincare products without distribution permits, marketed both directly and through online media. The determination of the research location was based on the relevance of the area to the focus of the study and its social characteristics that support empirical legal research.

The sources of data in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with officials from the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM), the Health Office, and authorized law enforcement officers. Secondary data were obtained through literature study, including laws and regulations, legal textbooks, scientific journals, and official documents related to cosmetic distribution and consumer protection.

Data collection techniques were carried out through interviews, documentation, and literature study. These techniques were used to obtain empirical and normative data comprehensively, thereby providing a complete picture of the practice of supervision and the handling of criminal offenses related to the distribution of hazardous skincare products.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively, through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analyzed data were then linked to the theory of legal effectiveness and the applicable statutory regulations in order to obtain analytical and argumentative conclusions.

III. RESULT & DISCUSSION

A. General Overview of Skincare Distribution in Langsa City

Based on the results of empirical research conducted in Langsa City, the distribution of skincare products shows a fairly complex dynamic and tends to increase over time. Skincare products are distributed not only through official channels such as pharmacies, licensed cosmetic stores, and beauty clinics, but also through unofficial channels, particularly social media and online marketplace platforms. This situation makes it difficult to conduct comprehensive supervision over the legality and safety of skincare products consumed by the public. Some of the products circulating do not have distribution permits from the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM), and there are even products containing hazardous substances that are still freely

marketed to consumers.(Hamid & SH, 2017)

Empirically, the research found that consumers in Langsa City tend to choose skincare products based on claims of quick results, recommendations from social media, and relatively affordable prices. Considerations regarding distribution permits and product safety are often overlooked. This indicates that the issue of hazardous skincare distribution is not solely related to weak government supervision, but is also closely linked to the level of legal and health literacy among the community. Therefore, the distribution of hazardous skincare products in Langsa City constitutes a multidimensional issue involving legal, health, economic, and social aspects..

B. Forms and Mechanisms of Supervision over Hazardous Skincare Products

1. Preventive Supervision

Preventive supervision constitutes an initial measure undertaken by the relevant authorities to prevent the circulation of hazardous skincare products before they cause harm to the public. In Langsa City, preventive supervision is carried out through various socialization and educational activities aimed at business actors and consumers. These activities include information regarding the obligation to obtain a distribution permit from the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM), an understanding of hazardous substances in cosmetics, and the importance of choosing safe and legally authorized skincare products. Preventive efforts are generally conducted by BPOM in cooperation with the Health Office and other related institutions.(Angriawan & Mutiarin, 2019)

However, the research findings indicate that the effectiveness of preventive supervision still faces several obstacles. The outreach programs have not reached all segments of society, particularly active social media consumers who are the primary targets of illegal skincare marketing. Furthermore, the formal and time-limited nature of information delivery often results in educational messages not being fully understood or internalized by the community. Therefore, although preventive supervision has been implemented, its impact on reducing the circulation of hazardous skincare products remains relatively limited.

2. Repressive Supervision

In addition to preventive measures, repressive supervision is carried out in response to violations that have already occurred. In Langsa City, repressive supervision is manifested through field inspections of cosmetic stores, pharmacies, and beauty clinics, as well as enforcement actions against business actors proven to distribute skincare products without distribution permits or containing hazardous substances. Such repressive actions may include product recalls, confiscation of evidence,

administrative sanctions, and further legal proceedings.

Based on the research findings, repressive supervision remains incidental and has not been conducted routinely or systematically. Law enforcement actions are often initiated only after receiving public complaints or specific findings in the field. This condition indicates that repressive supervision has not yet fully created a deterrent effect for business actors, particularly those marketing illegal skincare products through online channels that are difficult to trace.

C. Obstacles in Law Enforcement Against Hazardous Skincare Products

1. Structural Obstacles

Structural obstacles constitute one of the main factors affecting the effectiveness of law enforcement against the circulation of hazardous skincare products in Langsa City. These obstacles relate to the limited number of supervisory officers, inadequate supporting facilities and infrastructure, as well as limited operational budgets. Such limitations result in supervision not being conducted intensively and comprehensively, particularly regarding the distribution of skincare products through online media, which often operates across regional boundaries.(Cotterrell, 2017)

This condition weakens the government's supervisory reach, thereby creating opportunities for illegal business actors to continue their activities without adequate oversight.

2. Legal Substance Obstacles

From the perspective of legal substance, Indonesia already possesses relatively comprehensive regulations concerning cosmetic distribution and consumer protection. However, research findings indicate that the implementation of these regulations at the regional level still faces various challenges. One of the primary obstacles is the lack of coordination among relevant institutions, such as the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM), the Health Office, and law enforcement authorities.

In addition, the enforcement of legal sanctions against violators is still predominantly administrative in nature, while criminal sanctions are rarely applied. This situation results in law enforcement failing to create an optimal deterrent effect for business actors who repeatedly distribute hazardous skincare products.

3. Legal Culture Obstacles

Legal culture obstacles are reflected in the low level of legal awareness among both business actors and consumers. Business actors tend to prioritize economic profit without adequately considering product safety and legality. On the other hand, consumers often adopt a pragmatic mindset, prioritizing instant results and low prices.

This weak legal culture reinforces the argument that efforts to address the circulation of hazardous skincare products cannot rely solely on law enforcement mechanisms, but must also involve changes in societal mindset and behavior

D. Efforts to Combat the Criminal Offense of Distributing Hazardous Skincare Products

Efforts to combat the circulation of hazardous skincare products in Langsa City are carried out through complementary preventive and repressive approaches. Preventive measures are directed at preventing legal violations through increased education, public outreach, and routine supervision of business actors. This approach aims to build legal awareness within the community and to reduce the potential for violations from the outset.

Meanwhile, repressive measures are implemented through law enforcement actions against business actors proven to have violated statutory regulations. Such enforcement is intended not only to create a deterrent effect but also to provide concrete protection for consumers. However, the effectiveness of repressive measures still needs to be strengthened, particularly in the consistent application of criminal sanctions against perpetrators of serious violations.(Johansen et al., 2025)

If analyzed using the legal system theory of Lawrence M. Friedman, the effectiveness of efforts to combat the circulation of hazardous skincare products in Langsa City is influenced by the interaction between legal structure, legal substance, and legal culture. The legal structure and legal substance are already in place; however, the legal culture of society and business actors remains the primary inhibiting factor.

Furthermore, the progressive law approach introduced by Satjipto Rahardjo emphasizes that law must be oriented toward substantive justice and the protection of vulnerable parties, in this case, consumers. Therefore, efforts to address the circulation of hazardous skincare products must be directed toward the tangible protection of public health, rather than merely fulfilling the formal aspects of the law(Cotterrell, 2017)

IV. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the circulation of hazardous skincare products in Langsa City remains a serious issue that threatens public health and consumer protection. Although, normatively, supervision and law enforcement have been regulated under the Health Law, the Consumer Protection Law, and regulations issued by the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM), their implementation at the regional level has not yet operated optimally. The main obstacles include limited supervisory resources, the distribution of products through social media platforms, and the low level of legal awareness among business actors

and consumers.

Law enforcement against the circulation of hazardous skincare products tends to emphasize administrative sanctions rather than criminal penalties, resulting in a deterrent effect that has not been maximally achieved. From the perspective of legal system theory, this problem reflects weak integration between legal structure, legal substance, and legal culture within society. Therefore, efforts to combat the circulation of hazardous skincare products require not only repressive measures but also preventive and participatory approaches that prioritize substantive consumer protection.

Efforts to address the circulation of hazardous skincare products in Langsa City should be carried out through strengthening technology-based supervision, enhancing the consistent application of criminal law enforcement against violating business actors, and improving public education and legal literacy. In addition, synergy among relevant institutions must be reinforced so that consumer protection and public health measures can be implemented effectively and sustainably.

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